



Satire and vilification, where is the border?

I would say, there are no limits!

By Massimiliano Andreetta*

The terroristic attack to the Charlie Hebdo office in Paris put the satire back to the centre of attention.

Satire has always faced difficult times for its proper features: with “satire” we mean the critical attention towards politics and society, with the use of irony and sarcasm. Throughout history beginning with ancient Greece and Rome, satire developed in a different way in every country, due to political circumstances and social environment. In Italy represents an important part of the information system and always received a lot of attention by mass media, audience and political characters.

In Italy there are a monthly satiric magazine titled “Il Vernacoliere” that collect many comics and satirical drawings, a tv-journal daily on air called “Striscia la Notizia” and every newspaper or journal has a satirical part in it. The satirical culture in Italy takes more place in television than in written form: “Striscia la Notizia”, for example, is well-known by every single Italian citizen and it is often more followed than tv information programs.

Most national newspapers place a cartoon on their first page regarding political topics and characters who, in the past few years, have shown a lack of seriousness in their activity.

Unfortunately for Italian reputation, everyone in the world remembers the face of Silvio Berlusconi and all the scandals related.

Despite Italy’s quick reaction to support France in the fight for freedom of expression, Italy has always applied a strong censure regarding the freedom of the press and satire in particular.

The large number of satirical websites, despite of traditional press, demonstrates the power of the institutional control.

The main Italian editorial groups use to support one or the other political side, moving as a political actor and who works in those press offices does it too.

There are lots of examples of many journalists and comedians who had many problems for hitting a nerve of any specific political actor.

The most famous satirical cartoonist in Italy, Forattini, received many legal action by politicians, because of his drawings. The most famous one was about D'Alema and Forattini risked to pay several millions Euros for legal cause.

He has been even censored by his editor in chief for comics about Jews and nobody quoted the power of Jewish lobby at the time.

Politicians always intimidate comedians in the name of "vilification". The line between the two, satire and vilification, is always fine. Enrico Luttazzi, another of the most famous Italian comedians, had legal actions for an amount of more than 80 millions Euros.

Therefore, in Italy has been necessary the intervention of the Supreme Court to ratify the right of satire, even if it is guaranteed but the Constitutional Chart with the articles 21 and 33.

The Italian population got upset by the terrorist attack and, as often happens, many social movements started to support the Charlie Hebdo cause.

During these days social networks are full of users posting pictures with papers saying "Je suis Charlie", embracing the right side of the story.

The curious point, although, is that the most part of them do not know what Charlie Hebdo is and what its comics are on.

We also don't know how long this attention is going to take audience and the real matter is that maybe in some days we'll forget what happened.

The hope is that, someday, people will be more careful and informed before, embracing the right cause with the needed consciousness, not just because it is "a trend".

** Massimiliano Andreetta is 25 years-old and he is from Udine, in Italy, he is currently pursuing a Master's degree in International Relations and Diplomacy.*

Since he was a teenager he was interested in Politics and media, with a passion for analyzing the role and effects of the two on the society.